mother, for example, fed her child rice gruel (okayu) at eight months and at the age of one year the child began eating sweet potatoes. By the time the child is ready to walk and play, he often carries with him a piece of sweet potato, and, in season, a piece of sugar cane. 853 262

A party is held on the first birthday anniversary of the child. This is more elaborate than the one which honored his birth. Birthdays are not celebrated each year. After the first anniversary, the next are on the 13th, 25th, 37th, 49th, and 61st birthdays, that is, at twelve year intervals. 852 527

The party for the first birthday of a child is particularly tender and affectionate. At one year, he can walk or stumble, and answer or smile to the calls of his parents and grandparents. [856] He can pick up things, throw them, and make his presence felt. The exhibition of these skills becomes part of the celebration. It is customary to invite both relatives and friends, who bring a small money present, from Y20 which is usual to Y100 which is uncommon.

527 852 431

During the party, the child is given several symbolic gifts. These are placed on a low table in the middle of the room which the child can easily walk to and reach. Usually the gifts are a book, a fountain pen (or a writing brush, fude), an abacus (soroban), [212] and a stack of paper money. These symbolize the wish that the child [802] will become proficient in learning, writing, counting and mathematics, and will become rich. The child is eagerly watched as he unsteadily [554] toddles to the table to see which article he picks up first. While the act is not taken seriously, the article which the child picks up first is supposed to indicate the field of endeavor in which he will be most fortunate.

These parties, small or large, include men, women, and children, but the majority of the guests usually are men. After the child has gone to bed, the party continues. In more formal and larger parties, the guests first come up to the father, go on their knees, bow, and make a short speech of congratulation. Sometimes these [576] speeches sound as if they are prepared beforehand, other times as [537] if they are spoken spontaneously. There is an exchange of sake between the father and his guest, both sipping from the same cup, the usual custom. The mother and the female relatives during this time are in the kitchen preparing the food. 852 527

Women sit by themselves. This is true of all celebrations when the sexes are together. Women do not drink. (In a similar party near [562] Matsuda, the old women--usually over 60--drank a little). The jolly [535] old women also love to dance solos in the traditional style. They [887] dance with grace and vigor. The evening progresses without any planned entertainment. There is talking and drinking, singing, and [533] samisen playing. Men, with a repertoire of Okinawan songs, sing in